

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image forming apparatus comprising:

first image forming means which controls at least two image forming sections from among a plurality of image forming sections to form an image by superimposing a plurality of colors;

second image forming means which controls a single image forming section from among the plurality of image forming sections to form a monochromatic image;

third image forming means which controls the single image forming section used by said second image forming means, and partially stops operation of the remaining image forming sections, to form a monochromatic image; and

control means which, when causing image forming of the monochromatic image by said second image forming means by switching over said first image forming means to said second image forming means, causes image forming of the monochromatic image by said third image forming means only during a prescribed period of time.

2. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first image forming means controls at least two image forming sections to form a color image.

3. The image forming apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the at least two image forming sections form color images by use of a plurality of developing means including at least black developing means.

4. The image forming apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the at least two image forming sections form color images by using at least one image carrier and the plurality of developing means.

5. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the single image forming section used by said second image forming means to form a monochromatic image uses only black developing means as developing means.

6. The image forming apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the single image forming section used by said second image forming means forms a monochromatic image by using the black developing means and image carriers associated therewith.

7. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a plurality of developing means, wherein stoppage of operation of the remaining image forming sections by said third image forming means causes stoppage

of at least one of said developing means.

8. The image forming apparatus according to claim 7, wherein stoppage of the operation of the remaining image forming sections by said third image forming means causes stoppage of developing means of colors other than black.

9. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein service life deterioration of the plurality of image forming sections when operation is based on control by said third image forming means is less than the service life deterioration of the plurality of image forming sections when operation is based on control by said first image forming means.

10. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising determining means which makes a determination of whether switching from a color image to a monochromatic image should occur, wherein, based on the determination by said determining means, a monochromatic image is formed by said second image forming means after control means switches over said first image forming means to said second image forming means during image forming of an image of a plurality of colors by said first image forming means.

11. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the prescribed period of time is a period during which a prescribed number of images are formed.

12. The image forming apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the prescribed period of time can be set.

13. An image forming apparatus comprising:

first image forming means which superimposes images of a plurality of colors by controlling two or more image forming sections from among a plurality of image forming sections;

second image forming means which forms a monochromatic image by controlling a single image forming section from among the plurality of image forming sections;

third image forming means which forms a monochromatic image by controlling the single image forming section used by said second image forming means and partially stopping operation of the remaining image forming sections; and

control means which, when causing image forming of the monochromatic image by said second image forming means by switching over said first image forming means to said second image forming means during image forming of a multicolor image by said first image forming means, causes image

forming of monochromatic images only in a prescribed number by said third image forming means, and then causes image forming of a monochromatic image by said second image forming means.

14. An image forming apparatus comprising:

first image forming means which forms an image by superimposing a plurality of colors by controlling two or more image forming sections from among a plurality of image forming sections;

second image forming means which forms a monochromatic image by controlling a single image forming section from among the plurality of image forming sections;

third image forming means which forms a monochromatic image by controlling the single image forming section used by said second image forming means and partially stopping operation of the remaining image forming sections; and

control means which, when causing image forming of the monochromatic image by said second image forming means by switching over said first image forming means to said second image forming means during image forming of images of a plurality of colors by said first image forming means, causes image forming of monochromatic images by said third image forming means, and then controls driving of the operation of the image forming sections stopped by said

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third image forming means.